

OBSERVATIONS BY LT. JOHN W. HAWLEY,

OF U. S. COAST SURVEY.

29th January, 1885.

MR. WM. C. CHASE:

Dear Sir—Your letter 13th inst., requesting my opinion, with such data as I may have bearing upon the subject as to the desirability of Tampa and adjacent places on the Gulf coast for winter resorts, especially as to health, has been received. In reply, I have to offer for your consideration the following data, taken from the log book of the Coast Survey schooner "Earnest," employed in the waters of Tampa and Sara Sota Bays, under my command during winter and spring of 1876: From February 9, 1876, till May 27, 1876, the record shows a total of 96 bright, pleasant days, 12 days during which there were at intervals light passing showers, and but one day when it rained constantly for twenty-four hours, and "let it be recorded," was the 3d of April, 1876.

The general direction of the wind during that period was from N.E. by way of east to S.E., and it varied in force from light airs to a fresh breeze. Calms were noted for ten days during the entire time. An easterly wind is pretty sure to bring fine, dry weather on the Gulf coast; the fogs and moisture picked up by it from the Atlantic Ocean having been consumed during its transit of the main peninsula. I have no record of the temperature, but I well remember that it was warm and delightful. The barometer stood high most of the time, showing a dry atmosphere, and at night there was so little dew as to be barely perceptible, and one could be out without wraps and have no fear of contracting a cold.

I had no sickness among my crew that could in any way be attributed to climatic effects. I am not familiar with Point Pinellas, but its location between large bodies of salt water would indicate that it should be free from malaria, and have an even, mild climate.

My experience during 1876, and subsequently in 1878, in Tampa bay and Charlotte harbor, leads me to believe that all places *on the coast*, in the immediate vicinity, are healthful, and on that account, and for many others which I might mention, are very desirable for winter resorts.

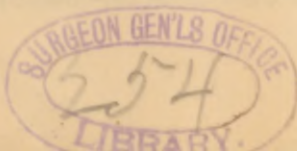
Very respectfully,

JOHN W. HAWLEY.

Lieutenant Hawley, at present engaged in New York harbor, is a prominent officer in the United States Geodetic and Coast Survey service. He surveyed Tampa bay, as may be seen by the official charts. Pinellas is on Tampa bay.

Lieutenant Hergesheimer, who has been for some time past engaged in surveying the waters of South Gulf coast of Florida, and to whom Dr. Toner refers in his letter herein, fully agrees with Lieut. Hawley. Lieut. Hergesheimer is gathering some very valuable data concerning the South Gulf coast region.

WM. C. CHASE.



FROM DR. JOHN ABERCROMBIE.

PINELLAS, FLORIDA.

MR. WM. C. CHASE:

Dear Sir—I have lived at this point for something over three years, moved here with a large family from Memphis, Tennessee, where for seven or eight years I practised my profession; prior to this, for many years I lived in the Mississippi river bottoms, below Helena, Arkansas. We came here almost a family of invalids, my wife with a chronic bronchial affection, with terrible cough, the rest of us, anæmic, sallow, subject to frequent attacks of intermittent fever; my wife experienced prompt relief, the cough disappearing entirely; the children are ruddy and robust.

After examining the Gulf coast carefully, from the head of the Caloosahatchee river to Cedar Keys, making frequent pedestrian excursions inland, I selected this point as my future home. I could find many localities where the soil was more fertile, but none that promised such immunity from disease as this. We have no swamp lands, no large area of "hammock" land and but little blackish or salt-marsh. The climate has never been over rated; the mild temperature, constant motion and purity of the atmosphere, make it almost perfection. So far as I am aware, I am the only physician within twenty miles or more of this point, I have since January 1st made five professional visits, at one time ten weeks elapsed without a call, not even a dose of medicine was wanted. The cases I have seen were general of a mild type and readily yielded to treatment. That there is so little disease in a country comparatively new and where the summer is long, is worthy of remark. Anaemia, in one form or another, especially in child bearing women, due entirely to poor quality and lack of variety in food, is the principal trouble. The healthy condition of the people (natives) who are utterly ignorant of everything appertaining to sanitation, is without doubt due to the fact that, with pure air, they have another great blessing, an abundant supply of pure and soft water. On the highest land an abundant supply can be had at a depth of between twenty and thirty feet; even during the most protracted drought. I do not indeed remember to have seen a single well of a depth greater than twenty feet. These wells are rude, cheap affairs; brick for curbing being out of the question. Water is generally found in a very pure and white sand, quite free from earthy matter; in this strata I have never found shell, limestone, or lime in any form. Occasionally water may be found in which there is a slight trace of sulphur. We have no well in this southern portion of the peninsula which is either "hard" or brackish, not even those wells in immediate proximity to the coast line. As wells are never covered, or protected from

the noonday sun by arbor or shed, the water is often warmer than it should be, this can be avoided by the use of (deeper) tubular piping, and by means of these, I have no doubt but that we may have flowing wells, such as are common in the eastern portion of the state. Cement, or underground cisterns for storing rain water can be made here more easily, and as cheaply as in clay soil. It is true that during the long drought of '83-'84 some few wells went dry, and careless families suffered for portable water, using that collected from holes in low spots, or from drains nearly gone dry, by deepening their wells a few feet, there was ever to be had a bountiful supply. To sum up this matter, I can say with perfect truth, that nowhere have I ever known a people so singularly free from disease of every kind. Nothing of a malarial type, I see no cause for malaria, nor have I ever known a country, anywhere so bountifully supplied with good, wholesome and palatable water. If any one ever suffered for water, it was because he was too lazy to dig twenty feet to obtain it. The fish and game and natural resources here are certainly an inducement for a comfortable, healthy home.

In haste, I am, dear sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M. D.

Dr. Abercrombie having travelled extensively in this country and abroad, and for years devoting attention to sanitary and health matters, is able to give an opinion. It will be seen he concurs with Dr. John B. Wall, of Tampa, and Dr. Charles J. Kenworthy, of Jacksonville, Fla., concerning Pinellas.

WM. C. CHASE.

FROM CIVIL ENGINEER HENRY A. SMELTZ.

PT. PINELLAS, FLA.

MR. CHASE:

Dear Sir—Your note of inquiry as to "my impressions" of Point Pinellas is before me. Well, my impressions to-day, after five and a-half years' residence, are very different from those I had when I left Tampa to come here, for then I expected to find it a low, swampy point of land jutting out into the gulf. Especially are my impressions different because then I landed here an invalid of several years' standing, having but one sound lung and scarcely able to walk, whilst to-day I am strong and robust and as able to spend my day in the field as I have ever been. And as an evidence of what the Point has done for me let me remind you that I surveyed the entire Point, with a shore line of about fifteen miles, and during all these months, winter and summer, I camped out with my men in one tent, and, with the others, slept on the ground most of the time, *and never lost a day from sickness, nor did any one of my men.*

The survey was made to lay off in five-acre lots all lands within a mile of the coast, and into ten-acre lots further back.

And as it was required of me to make a detailed report on the character of each lot as to high or low land, quality, what adapted to, &c., &c., it necessitated my going over and becoming acquainted with every portion of the Point.

As to the shore lines I find, on comparing my own field notes with those of the United States Survey of 1848, that the shore lines generally have receded and the banks become more abrupt.

The record of my level-book along these shores would surprise any one unacquainted with this sub-peninsula. As a rule the land rises gradually, but decidedly, as soon as you leave the water line, and on an average of two hundred yards back the level-book shows an elevation of from seven to ten feet, except, of course, where the shore line is abrupt, and here frequently the banks are fifteen feet above tide-water. Then, as you go inland to what may be called the backbone ridge or water-shed, which, on the Point, would not be inaptly represented in shape by a horseshoe, we reach an elevation of from *sixty to ninety feet*.

Owing to this rise of the land everywhere, and the peculiar shape of the Point, I believe Point Pinellas has the best system of *natural* drainage of any large body of land I have ever surveyed (except in mountain regions). And with a very small expenditure to open up a few ditches there is not an acre of land on Point Pinellas which will not be perfectly drained and fit for cultivation.

Hence, the wonderful exemption from all forms of malarial disease.

As to water, I never had less trouble to supply my men with drinking water, for when out of reach of one of the scores of splendid wells of pure, soft water all over the Point, the digging of a hole from five to ten feet deep, and a flour barrel put in for curbing would, by next morning, give us an abundance of good water. When on the immediate sea shore, we need go back but a few feet from tide mark and soon get plenty of fresh water by digging down about three feet.

I think, without exception, the water supply of Point Pinellas is as abundant and of as good quality as I have ever seen in any country.

I cannot close this hasty sketch of "my impressions" of Point Pinellas without recording my disappointment as to the number of snakes found during the survey we made, for I am sure I never surveyed in any State where there are so few snakes to the square rod as there are in this section.

Respectfully,

HENRY A. SMELTZ, C. E.

Mr. Smeltz was recommended to visit Florida by Dr. Frank Donaldson, Sr., of Baltimore, Md.

WM. C. CHASE.